

CLAIMS:

1. A biologically isolated proteinaceous molecule having the following characteristics:

- (i) comprises an amino acid sequence having at least about 15% similarity but at least about 5% dissimilarity to the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2;
- (ii) exhibits at least one property in common with vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF).

2. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 1 wherein the molecule exhibits at least one of the following properties:

- (i) an ability to induce vascular endothelial cells;
- (ii) an ability to interact with *flt-1/flk-1* family of receptors; and/or
- (iii) an ability to induce cell migration, cell survival and/or an increase in intracellular levels of alkaline phosphatase.

3. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 1 or 2 wherein said molecule has the capacity to induce astroglial proliferation.

4. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 1 wherein said molecule is of human origin.

5. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 1 wherein said molecule is of non-human origin.

6. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 5 wherein said molecule is of livestock animal, companion animal, laboratory test animal, avian, fish or reptilian origin.

7. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 5 wherein said molecule is encoded by a gene located at chromosome 11q13.

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8. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 1 wherein the percentage similarity to SEQ ID NO:2 is at least about 30%.

9. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 1 wherein the percentage similarity to SEQ ID NO:2 is at least about 40%.

10. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 1 wherein the percentage similarity to SEQ ID NO:2 is at least about 60-70%.

11. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 1 comprising a sequence of amino acids as set forth in SEQ ID NO:4 or a part, fragment, derivative or analogue thereof.

12. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 1 comprising an amino acid sequence substantially set forth in SEQ ID NO:6 or a part, fragment, derivative or analogue thereof.

13. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 1 comprising an amino acid sequence substantially set forth in SEQ ID NO:8 or a part, fragment, derivative or analogue thereof.

14. A proteinaceous molecule according to claim 1 comprising an amino acid sequence substantially set forth in SEQ ID NO:10 or a part, fragment, derivative or analogue thereof.

15. A recombinant molecule having the following characteristics:

(i) an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in SEQ ID NO:4 or having at least about 15% similarity to but at least about 5% dissimilarity to the amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2;

(ii) exhibits at least one biological property in common with VEGF.

16. A recombinant molecule having the following characteristics:

- (i) an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in SEQ ID NO:6 or having at least about 15% similarity to but at least about 5% dissimilarity to the amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2;
- (ii) exhibits at least one biological property in common with VEGF.

17. A recombinant molecule having the following characteristics:

- (i) an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in SEQ ID NO:8 or having at least about 15% similarity to but at least about 5% dissimilarity to the amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2;
- (ii) exhibits at least one biological property in common with VEGF.

18. A recombinant molecule having the following characteristics:

- (i) an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in SEQ ID NO:10 or having at least about 15% similarity to but at least about 5% dissimilarity to the amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2;
- (ii) exhibits at least one biological property in common with VEGF.

19. A recombinant molecule according to claim 15 or 16 or 17 or 18 having at least one of the following properties:

- (a) an ability to induce vascular endothelial cells;
- (b) an ability to interact with *flt1/flki* family of receptors;
- (c) an ability to induce cell migration, cell survival and/or increase intracellular levels of alkaline phosphatase.

20. A recombinant molecule according to claim 15 or 16 or 17 or 18 having the capacity to induce astroglial proliferation.

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21. A recombinant molecule according to claim 20 wherein the molecule comprises an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in SEQ ID NO:6.

22. A peptide fragment corresponding to a portion of the amino acid sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:4 or a derivative or chemical equivalent thereof.

23. A peptide fragment according to claim 22 having the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:6 or a chemical equivalent thereof.

24. A peptide fragment according to claim 22 having the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:8 or a chemical equivalent thereof.

25. A peptide fragment according to claim 22 having the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:10 or a chemical equivalent thereof.

26. A nucleic acid molecule comprising a sequence of nucleotides or complementary to a sequence encoding a proteinaceous molecule having the following characteristics:

- (i) comprises an amino acid sequence having at least about 15% similarity but at least about 5% dissimilarity to the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2;
- (ii) exhibits at least one property in common with vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF).

27. A nucleic acid molecule according to claim 26 wherein the proteinaceous molecule exhibits at least one of the following properties:

- (i) an ability to induce vascular endothelial cells;
- (ii) an ability to interact with *Flt-1/flk-1* family of receptors; and/or
- (iii) an ability to induce cell migration, cell survival and/or an increase in intracellular levels of alkaline phosphatase.

28. A nucleic acid molecule according to claim 27 wherein the proteinaceous molecule has the capacity to induce astroglial proliferation.

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29. A nucleic acid molecule according to claim 28 wherein said molecule encodes an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in SEQ ID NO:6.

30. A nucleic acid molecule according to claim 1 wherein said molecule is of human origin.

31. A nucleic acid molecule according to claim 1 wherein the percentage similarity to SEQ ID NO:2 is at least about 30%.

32. A nucleic acid molecule according to claim 26 comprising a nucleotide sequence substantially as set forth in SEQ ID NO:3 or having at least 15% similarity thereto or capable of hybridising under low stringency conditions to a reverse complement of the nucleotide sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO:3 provided that the nucleotide sequence has at least 15% similarity but at least 30% dissimilarity to the nucleotide sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3.

33. A nucleic acid molecule according to claim 26 encoding a murine homologue of human VEGF and comprising a nucleotide sequence substantially as set forth in Figure 9.

34. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a proteinaceous molecule according to claim 1 or 2 or 3 or 11 and one or more pharmaceutically acceptable carriers and/or diluents.

35. A method for preparing a recombinant molecule having the following characteristics:

- (i) comprises an amino acid sequence having at least about 15% similarity but at least about 5% dissimilarity to the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2;
- (ii) exhibits at least one property in common with vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF),

said method comprising expressing a nucleic acid molecule encoding said recombinant

molecule by a suitable host grown under conditions effective to synthesise said recombinant molecule and then isolating said molecule.

36. A method according to claim 35 wherein the nucleic acid molecule comprises a sequence of nucleotides as set forth in SEQ ID NO:3 or having at least 15% similarity thereto or is capable of hybridising under low stringency conditions to a reverse complement of the nucleotide sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO:3 provided that the nucleotide sequence has at least 15% similarity but at least 30% dissimilarity to the nucleotide sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:3.

37. A method of inducing astroglial proliferation in a mammal, said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective amount of a recombinant proteinaceous molecule having the characteristics:

- (i) comprises an amino acid sequence having at least about 15% similarity but at least about 5% dissimilarity to the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2;
- (ii) exhibits at least one property in common with vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF),

said administration being for a time and under conditions sufficient to induce astroglial proliferation.

38. A method according to claim 37 wherein the recombinant proteinaceous molecule comprises an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in SEQ ID NO:3 or is a derivative thereof.

39. A method according to claim 37 wherein the recombinant proteinaceous molecule comprises an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in SEQ ID NO:6 or is a derivative thereof.

40. A method of promoting neuronal survival and/or proliferation in a mammal, said method comprising administering to said mammal an effective amount of a recombinant proteinaceous molecule having the characteristics:

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(i) comprises an amino acid sequence having at least about 15% similarity but at least about 5% dissimilarity to the sequence set forth in SEQ ID NO:2;

(ii) exhibits at least one property in common with vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF),
said administration being for a time and under conditions sufficient to induce astroglial proliferation.

41. A method according to claim 40 wherein the recombinant proteinaceous molecule comprises an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in SEQ ID NO:3 or is a derivative thereof.

42. A method according to claim 40 wherein the recombinant proteinaceous molecule comprises an amino acid sequence substantially as set forth in SEQ ID NO:6 or is a derivative thereof.

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